DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 492 CG 029 475

AUTHOR Stickel, Sue A.

TITLE School Reform and the School Counselor: Restructuring for the 21st Century.

PUB DATE 1999-04-21

NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Role; Delphi Technique; *Educational Change; Educational Practices; Educational Trends; Effective Schools Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Organizational Effectiveness; Professional Development; Questionnaires; Research and Development; Research Methodology; School Counseling; *School Counselors; *School Restructuring; Theory Practice Relationship

IDENTIFIERS Coalition of Essential Schools; Experts

ABSTRACT

This study is designed to gauge the impact that school reform and restructuring is having on the functions of school counselors. It explores how school counselors will work as the new century begins, and projects how changes in roles and responsibilities may impact school counselor training programs. The Delphi research method was used to forecast future trends among counselors in schools affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools. Preliminary results indicate school reform has caused school counselors to become more involved in collaborative efforts, to use more technology, and to work more toward career preparation and professional development. Reform measures do not seem to be allowing counselors to be more involved with group work. Traditional issues such as caseload volume, the amount of paperwork, and the addition of nonguidance responsibilities continue to be of concern. (Contains 11 references and a copy of the second questionnaire, which was used to evaluate professionals' work roles, opinions of school reform/restructuring efforts, and speculations on the future of school counselors. (JDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 433 492

School Reform and the School Counselor:

Restructuring for the 21st Century

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American

Educational Research Association

April 21, 1999

Montreal Canada

Sue A. Stickel

Associate Professor

Department of Leadership and Counseling

Eastern Michigan University

Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Stickel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG029475

School Reform and the School Counselor: Restructuring for the 21st Century

Most administrators in American schools report that schools within their district boundaries are engaged in some reform activity (Shields & Knapp, 1997). These reforms typically are aimed at improving instruction, raising student achievement levels, and promoting school-level planning and problemsolving. Restructuring as part of school reform means changing the basic organizational structure of the school which in essence involves changing the "factory model" into something different (Short & Greer, 1997) School counselors are being encouraged by their professional organizations to use their highly unique skills to assist with school restructuring (Burgess & Dedmond, 1994; Humphrey & Myer, 1994).

The purpose of this study is to gauge the impact that school reform and restructuring is having on the functions of school counselors. A further goal is to begin the process of anticipating how school counselors will work as the new century begins and how this will impact school counselor training programs.

Method

The Delphi method is used for this study. The technique was developed as a tool for forecasting future trends for the Rand Corporation in the 1950's (Dalkey, 1967). Today the technique is also considered a reliable qualitative research technique for problem solving, decision making and group consensus reaching (Murry & Hammons, 1995). Data is collected using multiple iterations of questionnaires.

The classic Delphi technique consists of four steps (Travis, 1976): (a) identifying a panel of experts to list opinions on a topic; (b) developing a second questionnaire from these opinions and asking respondents to evaluate items using a likert type scale; (c) sending each participant a list and summary of responses to the second questionnaire that prompt responses to a third questionnaire; (d) analyzing the third questionnaire. Generally two to four iterations are necessary to reach consensus.

Sample

The "panel of experts" was selected from schools which are members of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition of Essential Schools began in 1984 as a high school-university

partnership at Brown University, whereby schools form a network supporting each other's efforts to reform. Membership has increased from 50 schools in 1988 to 100 in 1990 to over 200 in 1995 and now includes elementary and middle schools (Cushman, 1996). Member schools are to be involved at some level in school reform. Counselors were selected based on membership in professional organizations, either the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association and/or their state branches. A nationwide sample was assured through using the Coalition schools and identifying counselors from elementary, secondary, and middle school work settings. Literature indicates that panel size should include a minimum of at least ten members. As panel size increases reliability improves, however researchers report that 25 to 30 participants seems to be a maximal size for the generation of new ideas (Murry & Hammons, 1995).

Questionnaire

The purpose of the Round 1 questionnaire was to select the panel and to identify recent changes in the job of school counselors, the effects of school reform, and counselor's perceptions of future changes. The first round materials consisted of a demographic data

sheet, a letter explaining the project and a questionnaire consisting of three open ended questions: (a) If you were a school counselor in 1990, what are you doing differently today than in 1990? If you were not yet a counselor in 1990, how is your work different today than when you started?; (b) How have school restructuring and reform efforts in your school changed your job?; (c) What do you think you'll be doing as a school counselor in five years that you aren't doing now? These materials were sent in March 1998 to all counselors (243) identified as working in schools belonging to the Coalition of Essential Schools. This was necessary due to the expense of obtaining lists of those belonging to professional organizations in order to simplify the match between professional organization membership and work in a Coalition school. Forty respondents were chosen to make up the panel for the second round of the Delphi study. These were selected based on geographic region, membership in professional organizations, and reported reading of professional journals, and work setting. This group is predominately female (29) and Caucasian (33), with an average of 19.5 years of experience, and working in predominately high school and middle school settings.

Data Analysis

Results of the round one questionnaire were analyzed for the development of the round two questionnaire. The statements generated through the responses to the three open ended questions became 53 questions in three categories for the second round (appendix a). Participants used a six point likert scale (Travis, 1976) to respond:

Strongly agree = 6

Agree = 5

Agree with reservation = 4

Disagree with reservation = 3

Disagree = 2

Strongly disagree =1.

Questionnaire Two was sent to participants in October 1998.

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and range) were computed for each question. A boxplot (Howell, 1992) provided a graphical representation of dispersion and extreme scores. On round three the participants were asked to re-rate each statement with the additional information of the group mean

response and their own response on the prior round. For questions where participants had responses that were either outliers or outside the H-spread (innerquartile range) of the boxplot, participants were asked to provide a written comment. Thirty participants remained for the round three questionnaire which was sent in February of 1999. At present 24 of 30 round three questionnaires have been returned with the final six participants having been contacted by phone. The following analysis is based on the preliminary results of the round three questionnaire.

Results

In order to determine whether or not there has been a significant convergence toward consensus between round two and round three the variance will be compared when all questionnaires have been returned. While statistical feedback is important, the results of a Delphi study are not necessarily reported statistically. Frequently items are grouped and identified based on a high, medium, or low degree of consensus (Baca & Braden, 1990). Using the boxplot and the 24 returned questionnaires, a high degree of consensus is identified as the hinge location (first and third quartile) having narrowed to, for example, between agree and strongly agree.

Twenty three of 53 questions indicated a high degree of consensus. A low degree of consensus is identified as the hinge location spanning four values on the likert scale, for example between disagree strongly and agree. Eight questions met this definition.

Counselors consistently answered agree or strongly agree to items 8,11,12, 18, 24, 42, and 44. Counselors seem to agree that they are involved in more teamwork with administration, students, teachers and parents. Strong agreement is indicated concerning doing more paperwork, having a larger caseload, doing more non-counseling duties, and having more evening obligations. Projecting five years into the future, counselors strongly agreed that they will be making greater use of technology and will be working collaboratively as part of teams.

Less strong agreement (agree or agree with reservation) seems to be the consensus for items 28, 32,33,39,40-44, 48, 49, and 52. Counselors generally agree that they are more involved with teaming efforts. Restructuring has increased the use of technology, resulted in more focus on preparing students for the work world, and placed more emphasis on professional development. Looking to the future, counselors see themselves running more prevention programs,

meeting the needs of more at-risk students, making greater use of technology, working consistently with parents, insuring student accountability, and doing more classroom based guidance.

Counselors consistently disagreed with items 19, 29, 46, and 51. Consistent disagreement was voiced concerning having more time for group work as a result of restructuring. Counselors disagreed that school reform has perpetuated the status quo. In five years counselors disagreed that counselors would be seen as more valuable and that caseloads would lessen, and that counselors would be working more independently and on a consultative basis.

Experiences vary more widely on items 2,3,5,6,7,25,26, and 38. Consensus is less apparent concerning whether more community agencies are providing services in schools and whether counselors are working with more severely disturbed students. Likewise for reports of doing more classroom guidance, presenting information in school assemblies, and having more involvement with scheduling. Less clear were the effects of block scheduling, the counselors' role in defending restructuring programs to the community, and the counselors' involvement with curriculum.

When the final questionnaires are received, an analysis of variance will be used to determine what if any shifts have occurred between rounds two and three. At that time a decision will be made whether or not a fourth round will add further information. Comments from those participants whose responses were outliers on round two will be analyzed for themes and patterns.

Discussion

Preliminary results from the "panel of experts" indicate that school reform has impacted school counselors in schools affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools. Counselors seem to be more involved as parts of teams, are using more technology, and are involved more with career preparation and professional development. School reform has not seemed to be allowing counselors to be more involved with group work.

Concerns that have plagued school counseling historically are a theme so far in this study. Counselors are concerned with greater caseloads, more paperwork, and additional non-guidance responsibilities. Members of this panel seem to be pessimistic that counselors will be more highly regarded in the near future.

Hart and Jacobi (1992) stated that our vision for counseling can't be separate from our vision for the educational system. Since most schools are seriously considering school reform, it is important that counselors look to the future in terms of the impact of school reform on how they work in schools.

References

Baca, J.C. & Braden, R.A. (1990). A research approach to the identification, clarification, and definition of visual literacy and related concepts. In Proceedings of Selected Paper Presentations at the Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 323 914).

Burgess, D.G. & Dedmond, R.M. (1994). Quality leadership and the professional school counselor. Alexandria, VA: ASCA.

Cushman, K. (1995, March). Making the good school better: The essential question of rigor. Horace, 2, 1-8.

Dalkey, N.C. (1967). Delphi. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Hart, P. & Jacobi, M. (1992). From gatekeeper to advocate. New York: The College Board.

Howell, D.C. (1992). Statistical methods for psychology (3rd Ed.). PWS-Kent Publishing: Boston.

Humphrey, R.S. & Myer, J.A. (1994). Telling and selling customer satisfaction: Advocacy. In Burgess, D.G. & Dedmond, R.M.

(Eds.). Quality leadership and the professional school counselor. (pp. 279-287. Alexandria, VA: ASCA.

Murry, J.W. Jr. & Hammons, J.O. (1995). Delphi: A versatile methodology for conducting qualitative research. The Review of Higher Education 18, 423-436.

Shields, P.M. & Knapp, M.S. (1997) The promise and limits of school-based reform: A national snapshot. Phi Delta Kappan, 79, 288-294.

Short, P.M., & Greer, J.T. (1997). Leadership in empowered schools: Themes from innovative efforts. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Travis, H.R. (1976). The Delphi Technique: A tool for community educators, Health Education, November/December, 11-13.

School Reform and the School Counselor:

Restructuring for the 21st Century

Round Two Questionnaire

Instructions: The questions are from the responses you and your colleagues provided on the first survey. The first section focuses on your level of agreement with statements related to what you are doing differently now. Section two considers the result of school reform/ restructuring efforts. Consider in section three what you think school counselors will be doing in five years.

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

(Circle response)

A space for comment is below each question. **Please feel free to comment as much or little as you like.**

Section One: What is different?

1. I am more involved with programs such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, and/or violence reduction — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

2. In my school more community agencies provide services through the school — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

3. I am working with more severely disturbed students — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

4. I am doing more group counseling — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

5. I am doing more classroom guidance — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

6. I am presenting information in school assemblies — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

7. I have more involvement with scheduling

SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

8. I am involved in more teamwork with administration, students, teachers parents SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

9. Computers have enabled me to be more efficient with transcripts, grades, and scheduling SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

10. I am more involved with state and/or national testing SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

11. I am doing more paperwork

SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

12. I have a larger caseload

SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

13. I am doing more mental health counseling I

SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

14. I am attending more meetings

SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

15. I am doing more work with students concerning career and college choices SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

16. I am working with a more developed guidance and counseling program SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

17. I am involved with more secretarial and administrative duties SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Section Two: How has school restructuring and reform changed the job?

18. Counselors are taking on more non-counseling duties even though the school has restructured SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

19. Due to restructuring counselors have more time for group work SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

20. As a result of restructuring counselors are doing more scheduling and testing SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

21. Due to restructuring the social/emotional aspect of schooling has more emphasis SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

22. School restructuring has meant more mental health staff e.g. social workers/case managers working in our school. SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

23. School restructuring has resulted in counselors being used more as consultants SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

24. As a result of restructuring, counselors have more evening obligations SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

25. Block scheduling has made it more difficult for counselors to work directly with students. SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

26. Counselors have had to sell and defend restructuring programs to parents/community SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

27. Counselors are more involved in school governing e.g. serving on committees II SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

28. Counselors are more involved with teaming efforts SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

29. In our school, reform has perpetuated the status quo SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

30. School restructuring has resulted in more emphasis on basic academic skills for students SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

31. Counselors are more involved with inservicing teachers on counseling related topics SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

32. Restructuring has increased the use of technology SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

33. As a result of restructuring, counselors are focused on preparing students for the world of work SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

34. Restructuring has resulted more student excitement since they have more learning options SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

35. Due to restructuring counselors are providing services that directly affect students SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

36. As a result of restructuring counselors are doing more paperwork related to accountability SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

37. Staff contacts are easier because of teaming SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

38. Counselors are more involved with curriculum and the instructional part of school SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

39. Counselors are placing more emphasis on professional development and the importance of the learning community I SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

Section Three: What do you think counselors will be doing in 5 years?

40. In five years counselors will be running more prevention programs SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

41. In five years counselors will meeting the needs of more at risk students by doing more mental health counseling SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

42. Counselors will be making greater use of technology SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

43. Counselors will be working with parents in a personal and consistent manner I SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

44. Counselors will be working collaboratively with other colleagues as part of teams SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

45. Counselors will be doing more group work SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

46. Counselors will be seen as more valuable and caseloads will lessen SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

47. Counselors will be working in smaller school structures SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

Use the following scale when responding: **Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Agree with Reservation (AR) Disagree with Reservation (DR) Disagree (D). Strongly Disagree (SD)**

48. Counselors will be spending more time tracking students progress towards meeting standards/outcomes — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

49. Counselors will be doing more career education — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

50. Counselors will be making more referrals to outside agencies — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

51. Counselors will be working more independently on a consultative basis — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

52. Counselors will be doing more classroom based guidance l — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment:

53. Counselors will have more professional development opportunities — SA A AR DR D SD

Comment: